

# Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

# NewsNotes

*a bimonthly newsletter of information on  
international peace and justice issues*

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"Global Good Neighbor" nurtures right relationships.....3

## **Latin America**

Guatemala: Indigenous in last place.....4

S. America: SOA Watch appeals to governments.....5

Brazil: Women uproot destructive eucalyptus.....6

Mexico: Report on systemic impunity.....7

Nicaragua: U.S. offers to fund election primaries.....8

## **Asia/Middle East**

Cambodia: Khmer Rouge trial could begin in '07.....9

Philippines: Human rights violations increase.....10

China: Poor law enforcement hurts migrant workers.....11

Nepal: From monarchy toward democracy?.....12

Iraq: Brzezinski calls U.S. "victory" unlikely.....13

## **Africa**

Africa: Challenging corruption, stolen wealth.....14

Horn of Africa: Drought spreads across region.....15

Zimbabwe: "We all fall down".....16

Sudan: Darfur crisis worsens.....17

Water and the community of life.....19

Water: Activists shift debate on privatization.....21

UN: Review of HIV/AIDS Declaration of Commitment.....23

UN: Human Rights Council created.....24

Maryknoll leadership statement on U.S. immigration.....24

Arms control: Embargoes systematically violated.....25

The Declaration of Peace.....25

Corporate accountability: Anti-AIDS drug accessibility.....26

Resources.....27

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*Peace, Social Justice and the Integrity of Creation*

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*Due to ongoing security measures, there is a significant delay in delivery of mail to Congressional offices. It is advised that constituents either use email or fax, or send mail to Congresspersons' home offices, rather than to the Washington, D.C. office.*

## "Global Good Neighbor" nurtures right relationships

*Anyone who needs me, and whom I can help, is my neighbor. The concept of neighbor is now universalized, yet it remains concrete. Despite being extended to all humankind, it is not reduced to a generic, abstract and undemanding expression of love, but calls for my own practical commitment here and now.* (Deus Caritas Est)

With this issue of *NewsNotes* we continue our reflections on the Global Good Neighbor initiative, a proposal of the International Relations Center ([www.irc-online.org](http://www.irc-online.org)) to change U.S. foreign policy to reflect basic values like "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Restoring an ethic of mutual respect for each other's rights and an understanding of the importance of community, will, we believe, greatly enhance the security and well-being not only of U.S. Americans, but also of our global neighborhood.

The International Relations Center has outlined seven guiding principles that reflect the global good neighbor ethic. Whether the problem is devastating tidal waves, global climate change, transnational terrorism, or fair trade, we believe these principles provide basic guideposts for global engagement, harmonize well with Catholic social teaching and could provide a framework of use to people with a fairly broad spectrum of political opinions.

**Principle one: Mutual respect:** Mutual respect is fundamental to constructive international relations and a central attribute of being a global good neighbor.

**Principle two: New foreign & domestic policies:** To be effective and win public support, a new foreign policy agenda must work in tandem with new domestic policies in the interests of the majority to improve security, quality of life, and basic rights in our own country.

**Principle three: Reciprocity & cooperation:** Given that the national interests, security, and social well-being of all peoples are interconnected, U.S. foreign policy must be based on reciprocity rather than domination, mutual well-being rather than cutthroat competition, and cooperation rather than confrontation.



*Photo of three Haitian women by Fr. Joe Towle, MM, courtesy of Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers*

**Principle four: Responsible leadership & partnership:** The United States will be best served by exercising responsible global leadership and partnership. Credible and effective global leadership does not result from exerting power over other nations, rather it is earned by setting good examples in our domestic and foreign policies that others will be inspired to emulate.

**Principle five: Balanced security:** An effective security policy should emphasize a proactive commitment to improving national and personal security through nonmilitary measures and international cooperation—fostering a sense among all nations that a peaceful global neighborhood is the best guarantee of national security.

Policies that encourage disarmament would go a long way toward improving the prospects of world peace. ... [T]he United States [could still] maintain a military capacity to defend attacks on national territory and participate in international peacekeeping missions.

**Principle six: Sustainable development:** The U.S. government should support equitable and sustainable development, at home and abroad, through its macroeconomic, trade, investment, and foreign assistance policies.

**Principle seven: Effective governance:** A peaceful and prosperous global neighborhood depends on effective governance at national, regional, and international levels. Over the long term, governments are most effective when they are democratic and encourage citizen participation, and when they are transparent and accountable.

Participating in the Global Good Neighbor initiative doesn't require signing a document of principles, doesn't mean joining or leaving the conservative, liberal, progressive, left, or right political camps. Rather it's an initiative to use citizen-based measures and values to evaluate and guide U.S. policy.

Imagine, for example, what good neighbor immigration policies would look like, or good neighbor energy policies or good neighbor economic policies.

## Guatemala: Indigenous in last place

*Ethnic and cultural diversity are still linked to a deep social inequality in Guatemala, where the indigenous peoples rank lowest in the national human development index. Unfortunately, this reality, shared by many other countries in the continent, is a great obstacle to reaching international commitments such as the Millennium Development Goals. The following article was written by Jose Henríquez, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

The distribution of economic and political power and the access to opportunities for developing human capacities have been and still are uneven among ethnic and cultural groups in Guatemala, according to the recently-issued 2005 National Development Report. The report, exploring facts from 1994 to 2004, analyzes the state of human development in the country through composite indexes of education, health and income, already a standard in the UN Development Program reports. It is important to remember that official recognition of Guatemala's multiculturalism is a recent achievement, related to the Constitution of 1986, the Agreement on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples of 1995 and the establishment of the Presidential Commission on Discrimination and Racism Against Indigenous Peoples in 2004.

The average national human development index, estimated for 2002, is 0.640. While the non-indigenous population index is 0.699, only one Mayan group scores over the average (Sakapulteko, 0.656). The K'iche' people, the largest of the Mayan groups, score 0.553; at the bottom is the Akateko group with 0.446.

The education sector shows enormous disparities. The average national education index is 0.613; none of the Mayan groups reach that number. The highest index belongs to the non-indigenous people (0.712) and the lowest score belongs to the Ch'orti' group (0.230). Among the employed population, 38.3 percent of indigenous people do not have any formal education versus 16.3 percent of non-indigenous people. For primary education, the percentages are similar, but for higher education levels the gap rises again: 10.2 percent of indigenous versus 28.1 percent of non-indigenous for secondary education, and one percent of indigenous compared to 6.7 percent of non-indigenous for advanced education. And in every case, the lowest values belong to indigenous women.

Clear ethnic and gender inequalities are also present in the economic sphere. On the income spectrum, non-

indigenous urban males are at the top, while indigenous rural women are at the bottom. The average national income index is 0.617; every Mayan group falls below that level.

The report underscores some improvements related to political participation despite unequal power spaces and resources. At the local level, the number of indigenous authorities can be considered significant (122 mayors out of 331 municipalities in 2003) and keeps increasing, but this is not replicated at the national level. Only eight percent of the elected deputies to Congress in 2003 were indigenous. Likewise, indigenous participation within the executive committees of political parties is minimal.

Notwithstanding the achievements, challenges are numerous. The report suggests that to break the appalling association between diversity and inequality, it is necessary to rethink state structures and actions and to transform the state into a truly plural institution, capable of acknowledging and empowering the varied expressions of diversity present inside the country. Racism and exclusion must be eliminated and ethnic equality must be set as a strong national policy.

Unfortunately, Guatemala's human development disparity is similar to that of other countries in the continent. Even if there are new scenarios characterized by greater democratic openness and constitutional recognition of the multiethnicity in many countries, persistent and growing gaps rooted in the structural discrimination of indigenous peoples continue.

In Latin America there are close to 40 million indigenous in 400 ethnic groups. Five countries hold almost 90 percent of the indigenous population: Peru (27 percent), Mexico (26 percent), Guatemala (15 percent), Bolivia (12 percent) and Ecuador (eight percent). In at least three of those countries indigenous represent 50 percent or more of the national population (Peru, Guatemala and Bolivia). In these countries, indigenous peoples have less access to basic services than non-indigenous peoples. For example, in Mexico more than 50 percent of households in indigenous regions have no access to electricity, and in Honduras the illiteracy rate among indigenous reaches 87 percent. In Ecuador, only 53 percent of the indigenous peoples have access to primary education services.

Poverty and exclusion are still the heritage of the indigenous in Latin America. It is impossible to reach the Millennium Development Goals unless serious reforms are made to guarantee the rights of indigenous people.

## S. America: SOA Watch appeals to governments

*The following article is written by Tim Provençal, a Maryknoll lay missionary living and working in Bolivia.*

When Maryknoll Father Roy Bourgeois, founder of SOA Watch; Lisa Sullivan, former Maryknoll lay missionary in Venezuela; and Carlos Mauricio, Salvadoran activist and torture survivor, landed at the airport in El Alto, Bolivia in early March, they didn't take much time to adjust to the altitude of the world's highest airport. They were greeted by Maryknoll lay missionary Maggie Fogarty, a stack of briefing papers, and a taxi to take them to their first meeting with Bolivian reporters and the new Bolivian ambassador to the U.S. Over the next three weeks, they traveled through Bolivia, Uruguay and Argentina promoting the SOA Watch's "Latin America Initiative" – direct appeals to Latin American governments to stop sending students to Ft. Benning's Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) formerly the School of the Americas (SOA). The result: strong commitments from Uruguay and Argentina to immediately stop sending troops to the SOA, and a statement from Bolivia that they will "dramatically reduce" the number of students they send.

The first victory for the Latin America Initiative came in Venezuela in 2004. In a January meeting with Bourgeois and Sullivan, President Hugo Chávez acknowledged, "This school deformed the minds of many Latin American soldiers, who from there went on to become dictators." (*El Nacional*, January 19, 2004) (Two SOA graduates were implicated in a failed 2002 coup against Chávez ) In February 2004, Venezuela's vice president Jose Vicente Rangel announced that his nation would never again send students to the SOA.

In Bolivia, Uruguay and Argentina, the delegation met with social movement leaders and government officials who were intimately aware of the connection between the SOA graduates and human rights atrocities. Two weeks of non-stop meetings in Bolivia eventually led to the door of the new president, Evo Morales, who asked for a formal request to be filed with his office. Two weeks later, cabinet minister Juan Ramon Quintana stated to the press that Bolivia will advance toward "total withdrawal" of its troops from the SOA. Bolivia has a long history of atrocities committed by SOA

graduates. Bourgeois was himself imprisoned and then expelled from Bolivia in the mid-1970s, when Bolivia was under the brutal dictatorship of SOA Hall-Of-Famer Hugo Banzer Suarez. More recently, in April 2000, SOA graduate Capt. Robinson Iriarte de La Fuente was captured on film shooting into a crowd of unarmed protesters in Cochabamba. Victor Hugo Daza, 17, was shot in the face and killed. (See the transcript of a "Now" telecast on the Bolivian protests over water and other natural resources on the PBS website: <http://www.pbs.org/now/>)

On March 25, Bourgeois, Sullivan and Mauricio met with Uruguay's defense minister, Azucena Berrutti, a former human rights lawyer who defended political prisoners during three decades of military dictatorships. She indicated that no troops had been sent to the SOA since the election of the current president, Tabaré Vázquez, and none will be sent under his administration. Over the past 40 years, 1,020 Uruguayan troops have graduated from the SOA. During that period over 60,000 people were arrested, and more than 20,000 (one out of every 50 citizens of the country) were detained and tortured.

A week after meeting with Berrutti, the delegation sat down with Argentina's defense minister, Nilda Garré. She likewise stated that Argentina will stop sending troops to the SOA. Her announcement came a week after the 30th anniversary of a bloody military coup largely led by two SOA graduates, Roberto Viola and Leopoldo Galtieri. During their dictatorships, between 10,000 and 30,000 Argentinians were tortured, disappeared and killed.

Will other South American nations soon join the growing SOA boycott list? Due to recent political changes in South America, leaders are now as likely to be survivors of torture as perpetrators. Chile's new president, Michelle Bachelet, saw her father kidnapped and killed, and she herself was detained and "mistreated" under infamous dictator Augusto Pinochet. Bolivia's vice president Alvaro Garcia Linera was accused of anti-state terrorism in 1991, tortured, and imprisoned for five years. Meanwhile, many SOA graduates, like Bolivian cabinet minister Juan Quintana, are now outspoken critics of the school.

While the final success for SOA Watch activists can only come in the halls of Congress, with the permanent closure of the school, their Latin American initiative may very well succeed in causing enrollment problems.



*Fr. Roy Bourgeois, Bolivian President Evo Morales, Lisa Sullivan*

## Brazil: Women uproot destructive eucalyptus

*On March 8, International Women's Day, over 2,000 women from the Via Campesina Brazil occupied an area of the Aracruz Cellulose Corporation in Barra do Ribeiro in southern Brazil and pulled up close to one million seedlings of eucalyptus trees. (Via Campesina, created in 1992, coordinates groups of peasants, small and medium-sized farmers, farm workers, rural women, and indigenous communities in Asia, Africa, the Americas, and Europe.) Brazilian media treated the women as violent vandals but failed to relate the reason for the women's protest, which was to alert society about a rapidly growing ecological and social problem fostered by Aracruz and other corporations throughout Latin America.*

The women's action was a protest against the "green deserts" generated by Aracruz's plantations of eucalyptus trees, which are grown almost exclusively for manufacturing paper to export to the U.S., Europe and Japan. Pulp-producing corporations such as Aracruz prefer to grow eucalyptus because it can be harvested in only 7-8 years, compared to 15 years for pine trees. Additionally, the tree plantations serve to counterbalance corporations' carbon dioxide emissions, allowing the businesses to claim, through the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, "carbon credits" that can be sold on the new world carbon market. But massive plantations of eucalyptus trees are far from ecologically, or socially, beneficial.

"Green deserts" occur in areas with large plantations of eucalyptus. The acrid leaf litter and shade they produce tend to smother smaller plants. Hardly any animal other than the koala, which is not native to Latin America, eats eucalyptus, nor do many bugs, resulting in few birds on eucalyptus plantations. The chemical processing of the wood pulp to make white paper also pollutes both water and air. Although it is green, there is very little life.

In a published statement, the women in Barra do Ribeiro wrote, "Where the green desert advances, biodiversity is destroyed, soil deteriorates, rivers dry up, without talking about the enormous pollution generated by cellulose factories that contaminate the air, water and threaten human health." The lateral roots of eucalyptus can extend up to 100 feet and are extremely difficult to remove, thus making land used for eucalyptus plantations unusable in the future. The trees also absorb large amounts of water and have a central taproot that

burrows straight down and grows as long as the tree is tall, draining even deep underground water sources. In Uruguay, eucalyptus plantations have dried up 30 meter deep wells, leaving the local population without water.

Another complaint brought up by the women of Via Campesina Brazil is that eucalyptus plantations provide far fewer jobs in comparison with other rural activities. According to a 2000 agricultural survey in Uruguay, every thousand hectares planted in trees generated 4.5 jobs, compared to 5.8 jobs in cattle raising, 9.2 in sheep raising, 10 growing cereals, 128 raising pigs and 262 on subsistence farms. According to David de Lino, an aide in the state assembly of Rio Grande do Sul, each job at the Aracruz plant in Bahia cost \$600,000 in investment, while creating a rural job costs an estimated \$2,900 and a retail job, \$30,000.



Despite the fact that Aracruz provides very few jobs while creating notable ecological and social destruction, it has been able to access huge amounts of public money. In the last three years, over two billion *reals* (US\$910 million) has been given or loaned to the corporation, with \$297 million coming from the Workers' Support Fund (FAT). The loans come with low interest rates—even lower than small farmers are charged in the National Program for Family Agriculture (Pronaf). In 2005, Aracruz reported profits of \$1.2 billion, but some of its investors, including the Swedish crown, withdrew their money this past January when Aracruz tractors tore down the houses and crops of 50 Guarani indigenous while police used helicopters, bombs and guns to expel them from land in the state of Espirito Santo, despite the fact that the land was still in public discussion with no definitions of who owned the land.

Unfortunately, most Brazilian media omitted these details when they reported the story of the women in Barra de Ribeiro. Some asked why the women would do such a thing. Frei Pilato Pereira, a Franciscan who works in the area, wrote, "[I]t was their concern for life, the fear of seeing nature being destroyed in the name of a false progress... a natural feeling to protect life today and for the future. It was a gesture from those who worry about children (those who are born and who will be one day)... Future generations will say, 'Blessed are the women that occupied Aracruz.'"

## Mexico: Report on systemic impunity

*On April 6, Joy Olson, executive director of the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), testified before the House of Representatives' International Relations Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations Committee about impunity in Mexico. The following is an excerpt from her testimony.*

"...[W]e have discovered that too often Mexico's criminal justice system, rather than solve and punish crimes – quite the contrary – contributes to confusion, cover-up, and impunity through widespread negligence, inefficiency, and abuse. And as a result, Mexico's criminal justice system suffers from an almost absolute lack of credibility – which undermines the system in the rare cases that it is working properly. [Olson then noted three problematic aspects of the Mexican justice system]: 1. Widespread impunity for high-profile crimes and human rights cases – and lack of credibility in the government's investigation of them – stemming from serious flaws in the criminal justice system; 2. the insidious impact of organized crime – particularly the drug trade – on the justice system, the rule of law, and respect for human rights; and 3. the need for serious reform of Mexican police and judicial institutions.

"The flaws and weaknesses of Mexico's criminal justice system that lead to such impunity are rooted in the system's authoritarian history. One-party rule [by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) for over 70 years] severely crippled Mexico's institutions and justice system, breeding a culture of authoritarianism and impunity... [T]he Mexican justice system evolved not to establish the rule of law, but to preserve the power of the powerful... This situation stunted the creation of professional and effective law enforcement and judicial institutions, fostered serious human rights abuses by the military and the police, and created the perfect environment for corruption to flourish. Law enforcement agents had little reason to develop the technical skills needed to conduct professional investigations based on solid evidence. ... [T]hey too often resorted to threats or torture to force confessions from suspects or convenient scapegoats. This option was especially attractive when police had little desire to find, or were discouraged from finding, the real criminals – in other words, when the criminals were their associates or local business and political elites.

"... [A]mong other flaws in the system, defendants are presumed guilty until proven innocent, trials consist

of a series of meetings (that not even the judge attends) where evidence is presented in written form, confessions are often the only evidence, and in practice the accused are not guaranteed access to legal counsel. Once a confession is obtained, it is almost impossible to invalidate it, even if a defendant can prove he or she was tortured. Police and prosecutors who engage in abusive tactics are rarely punished for it, propelling the cycle of abuse and impunity.

"When crimes, usually high-profile ones, do result in investigations ... there are so many questions about the validity of the evidence and the methods by which that evidence was obtained that the victims' friends and family members, as well as society at large, are never able to fully trust the official version of events.

"For example, with respect to the murders of hundreds of women in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua since 1993, local authorities claim that 177 investigations have resulted in convictions. Yet ... crime scenes were not preserved, witnesses were not interviewed, forensic tests were shoddy, DNA tests to identify the victims were inconclusive and contradictory, families were harassed and threatened ... In some of the cases, law enforcement and judicial agents exacerbated the problem by detaining and torturing scapegoats while letting the real killers go free.

"Compounding this problem is the insidious impact of the drug trade on Mexico's police and judicial institutions. ... The links between police and drug traffickers in Juárez are exposed with such regularity that they fail to shock. When 12 men's bodies were unearthed in January 2004 from the backyard of a middle-class home, no one was surprised to find out that the assassins were a group of policemen working for the Juárez cartel.

"The case that most exemplifies this relationship between organized crime and impunity is the murky investigation into the [November 2001] murders of eight women ... Almost immediately, police arrested two bus drivers and claimed they had spontaneously confessed to the killings. As soon as they were brought before a judge, the men argued they were innocent and had been tortured into confessing to the crimes. Two lawyers mounted a strong defense, taking every opportunity to publicly denounce the torture their clients suffered. In February 2002, one of the lawyers was gunned down by police – the same police implicated in his client's detention and torture – but the murder was never seriously investigated; a judge exonerated the police, arguing they had acted in self defense. One of the

bus drivers died under questionable circumstances in prison. [E]arlier this year, the remaining lawyer was ambushed and killed ... In other words, the two lawyers most likely to link Juárez police to the murders of women, or at the very least to their cover up, ended up dead – one at the hands of the police themselves.

“One of the rare accomplishments of the special prosecutor for the Juárez murders was the compiling of a list of 170 state justice officials who she believed to be administratively or criminally negligent in their handling of the investigations. ... She described these officials’ conduct as ‘incorrect, negligent, or outright omissive’ and noted that ‘as a result of these serious

deficiencies ..., some of the homicide investigations will be practically impossible to solve.’ She urged the local authorities to punish these officials because ‘due precisely to [their] negligent or omissive attitude, it will be extremely difficult to capture the killers...’

“This sad state of affairs is not the result of mere incompetence. It is the result of organized crime’s corrosion of the state’s law enforcement and judicial institutions. Horrific murders go unpunished, their killers go free, and the very people whose job it is to bring them to justice are instead allowing them to evade it.”

*To read the entire statement on WOLA’s website, go to [www.wola.org/Mexico/statement.pdf](http://www.wola.org/Mexico/statement.pdf)*

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## Nicaragua: U.S. offers to fund election primaries

*Nicaragua will hold its next presidential election in November 2006. Its internal politics continue to be a source of controversy for the U.S. government. The following article is based on an alert from Witness for Peace, [www.witnessforpeace.org](http://www.witnessforpeace.org)*

On April 5, Paul Trivelli, the U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua, sent a letter to all non-Sandinista Nicaraguan political parties offering U.S. funding for primaries in order to choose one presidential candidate to represent all of them. On April 17, he met with most of the conservative parties, who already had selected their presidential candidates and had not requested multiparty primaries.

Trivelli’s futile intention was to unify the non-Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN, the Sandinistas) political contenders in the Nicaraguan political system in order to increase the chances of defeating presidential hopeful and former president from the FSLN, Daniel Ortega.

Trivelli’s proposal to fund the primaries was yet another incident in a long chain of statements and events that have pushed the limits of appropriate diplomacy. On February 26, leading up to regional elections, he published an opinion piece in *Nicaragua Hoy*, one of the country’s major newspapers, entitled “The Nicaragua that Nicaraguans Want,” urging Nicaraguans to reject caudillos, a reference to Ortega and Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC) leader Arnoldo Aleman, the once U.S.-supported candidate who lost favor when he was convicted of embezzling US\$100 million from Nicaragua’s state coffers. He has stated that Ortega has questionable democratic credentials, and that in order



for the U.S. to work with an elected president, that president must want to work with the U.S. on its security goals and support a sensible economic policy.

While he has not explicitly voiced support for any one candidate, Trivelli has made it clear that he will continue to make statements directed at Nicaraguan voters clearly attempting to influence their vote. However, some Nicaraguans wonder if Trivelli’s words might have the opposite effect, such as in Bolivia in 2003. At that time, the U.S. ambassador told Bolivians not to vote for Evo Morales, who then proceeded to win more votes than expected and almost claim the election. Regardless of the results, the U.S. should respect the sovereignty of other nations’ political institutions to follow their own processes, and should not attempt to unify political actors in another country for political gain. The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations clearly states that it is the duty of all persons enjoying diplomatic privileges and immunities not to interfere in the internal affairs of another state.

### ***Faith in action:***

Please call Tom Pierce at the Nicaragua Desk at the U.S. State Department at 202-647-3559 and Thomas Shannon at the Bureau of Western Hemispheric Affairs at 202-647-5780 and tell them to ensure that Ambassador Trivelli’s work in Nicaragua does not threaten the sovereignty of the Nicaraguan people or its political institutions. If you are a tax-payer, tell them that you do not want your tax dollars used to support interference in Nicaragua’s politics.

## Cambodia: Khmer Rouge trial could begin in '07

*More than a quarter century after the Khmer Rouge were driven from power in Cambodia, some surviving leaders could face a tribunal next year on charges stemming from their regime. From 1975 to 1979 the Khmer Rouge tortured, starved or executed an estimated 1.7 million to two million Cambodians – about a quarter of the country's population.*

A UN Group of Experts in 1999 reported *prima facie* evidence that the Khmer Rouge had committed war crimes, genocide and other crimes against humanity. Cambodia and the UN agreed in 2003 to jointly convene trials of former Khmer Rouge leaders. The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, the official name of the tribunal, would include both Cambodian and international judges.

Proceedings are projected to run for three years at a cost of \$60 million. Court chambers and a 500-seat amphitheater for observers have been built 10 miles west of Phnom Penh. (See Craig Etcheson's Policy Brief on the Khmer Rouge tribunal on the Fund for Reconciliation and Development website at [www.ffrd.org](http://www.ffrd.org).)

Time is clearly running out for the long-delayed trials. Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot died in 1998, and many Cambodians today are too young to remember his regime.

Observers expect perhaps 10 Khmer Rouge leaders to be tried; there would be no death penalty. Meanwhile, thousands of Khmer Rouge rank and file live freely throughout the country. Tensions sometimes arise between the former members and villagers whose families suffered persecution during the Khmer Rouge era.

The human scope of the tragedy is difficult to comprehend. The Khmer Rouge sought to create a society free of class structures or foreign influence. In doing so, "(t)he communist movement ... killed teachers, doctors, merchants and Muslims. It abolished religion and closed schools and banks. It emptied cities and forced people to work on cooperative farms." (*Washington Post*, March 10, 2006)

Some of the most infamous sites linked to the Khmer Rouge have become household terms: Tuol Sleng, the high school-turned-prison in Phnom Penh where an estimated 14,000-20,000 Cambodians were tortured and marked for execution; and killing fields such as Choeung Ek, 10 miles south of the capital, where 5,000 skulls can be seen in a Buddhist stupa.

Some Khmer Rouge are speaking out, offering hints as to a possible defense if the trials go forward. A

former interrogator at Tuol Sleng, now a 48-year-old farmer, says of his superiors at the time, "We were under their command. If I refused to obey, I would be killed."

U.S. Ambassador Joseph A. Mussomeli said in March, "All the flaws of modern Cambodia ... have been exacerbated by the failure of the international community to bring the leaders of the Khmer Rouge to justice. The culture of impunity that we see throughout Cambodia today is rooted in the irrefutable belief among its people that no crime is so great that it must be punished, and that whatever any Cambodian does is fine because it cannot possibly be worse than what the Khmer Rouge did – and got away with doing."

Nevertheless, Congress has restricted U.S. funding for the tribunal until now, in part because of allegations that Cambodia's judiciary is neither free from corruption nor free from interference by the executive branch.

The international community has been slow to respond to alleged war crimes or genocide – witness Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Darfur in the last dozen years alone. Whatever the outcome of the planned Khmer Rouge tribunal, it should serve as a stark reminder and will hopefully have a salutary effect. As a torture survivor of one Khmer Rouge prison recently told a news reporter, "Please – tell the whole world that no place should ever repeat this."

### **For more information:**

The Open Society Justice Initiative provides information about the planned tribunal on its website at [www.justiceinitiative.org](http://www.justiceinitiative.org). In a related service, current news about the tribunal in the Cambodian media is posted to those who subscribe by contacting [cji@online.com.kh](mailto:cji@online.com.kh). Craig Etcheson's article, cited above, provides background on the tribunal including courtroom procedures and the selection process for judges. Former *New York Times* correspondent and UN bureau chief Barbara Crossette writes about the tribunal in "Judging the Khmer Rouge, Finally" for the UN Association at [www.unausa.org](http://www.unausa.org). The Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), [www.dccam.org](http://www.dccam.org), preserves the history of the Khmer Rouge regime and compiles information that could serve as evidence of alleged Khmer Rouge crimes. Yale University's Cambodian Genocide Program, DC-Cam's parent organization, offers a variety of resources at [www.yale.edu/cgp/](http://www.yale.edu/cgp/). The Cambodian government website for the Khmer Rouge Trial Task Force can be found at <http://www.cambodia.gov.kh/krt/>.

## Philippines: Human rights violations increase

*Human rights advocates report there were nearly 900 cases of human rights violations in the Philippines last year, the highest number since the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. More than 99,000 persons were victimized, including 179 persons killed in political assassinations and another 46 abducted, according to KARAPATAN (Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights).*

KARAPATAN says many of those killed were local government officials, lawyers, journalists, church workers and human rights activists. Progressive political parties were especially hard hit. Anakpawis (Toiling Masses) lost 33 members, and Bayan Muna (People First) 30. (Together the two parties hold fewer than half a dozen seats in the Philippine Congress.)

The human rights group says many local leaders of progressive groups were harassed, illegally detained or threatened during 2005, and two local Bayan Muna headquarters were set on fire. KARAPATAN says the incidents are part of a systematic effort of the government of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to silence or destroy its most vocal critics.

Journalists who expose military and police abuse, graft and corruption, or involvement of government officials with crime syndicates are also targets, KARAPATAN says. The National Union of Journalists says seven members of the media were killed last year.

Most of the 179 who were slain were reportedly killed by two-man teams on motorcycles with the support of other motorcycle-riding men. KARAPATAN says the pattern of assassination is the same nationwide. The human rights group also says the killings occur in spurts over a one- to two-month period, followed by a lull of several months and then further killings, suggesting the violence is centrally directed against chosen targets.

Representative Satur Ocampo of Bayan Muna says he has personally brought the issue to Arroyo's attention several times, but no action has been taken. He warns, however, that government inaction only encourages further killing.

Instead, KARAPATAN says, Arroyo has issued several executive orders that could lay the groundwork for a possible dictatorship. For example, it says Arroyo used a repressive law from the Marcos era to adopt a policy of "calibrated preemptive response" against public rallies. KARAPATAN says the policy is intended to

suppress protest actions and curtail freedom of assembly. The human rights group also says Arroyo has urged Congress to adopt a National Identification System based on her executive order, and to pass a harsh anti-terrorism bill.

Meanwhile, extra-judicial killings continue. More than two dozen political assassinations were reported in the first two months of 2006. More recently, one activist was killed and another was wounded in separate shooting incidents during April.

The Asian Human Rights Commission ([www.ahrchk.net](http://www.ahrchk.net)) said Enrico Cabanit was killed and his daughter was critically wounded April 24 when a gunman shot them in Panabo City on the southern island of Mindanao.

Shortly before the shooting Cabanit and other farmers had met with officials of the Department of Agrarian Reform. They were demanding that a tract of land owned by a wealthy family be included in an agrarian reform program and awarded to the farmers.

On April 6 activist Nicanor Briones, 42, suffered multiple gunshot wounds when gunmen attacked him in Naga City on the northern island of Luzon. At the time of the incident he and other members of civil society organizations had been protesting government-proposed changes to the country's 1987 Constitution. Some human rights observers say the changes would weaken safeguards on civil liberties.

Amid the outrage over such deadly human rights violations, Arroyo won the approval of the European Community and others recently with an expression of her concern for life. On April 15 she commuted the sentences of the country's 1,200 prisoners on death row to life imprisonment.

### **Faith in action:**

Thank President Arroyo for her stance on capital punishment, but urge her and other authorities to make every effort to halt extra-judicial killings, bring aggressors to justice and preserve free speech and assembly. Write to: (1) President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, New Executive Building, Malacañang Palace Compound, J.P. Laurel St., San Miguel, Manila, Philippines; (2) the Hon. Raul M. Gonzalez, Secretary, Department of Justice, DOJ Bldg., Padre Faura St., 1004 Manila, Philippines; and (3) the Hon. Purificacion Quisumbing, Chairperson, Commission on Human Rights, SAAC Bldg., Commonwealth Ave., U.P. Complex, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines.



## China: Poor law enforcement hurts migrant workers

*Enforcing existing labor laws would give better protection to China's rural migrant workers than adopting new regulations, China labor rights advocates say.*

Delegates to the National People's Congress (NPC), China's highest lawmaking body, proposed legislation in March to eliminate discrimination against rural migrant workers. They sought to provide for equal job opportunities, equal pay, rest periods and holidays, and social security compensation, among other rights.

However, the China Labour Bulletin (CLB, [www.china-labour.org.hk](http://www.china-labour.org.hk)) says those rights are already embodied in the Chinese constitution, labor law and trade union law. It concedes that the workers often accept strenuous, low-paying jobs that do not even provide health and safety protection. But it blames local governments, in part, for discriminating against rural migrant workers who seek employment in their towns and cities. "Therefore," the CLB says, "the protection of the rights of rural migrant workers is not a question of the law but of the administration of the law."

The CLB says giving rural migrant workers special treatment under the law could actually hurt their cause. "(I)t will exclude them by defining them as something other than urban workers or [as] another group of workers and strengthen the current view held by those in urban areas that this is a special social group that has been discriminated against," it explains.

The State Council, China's chief administrative authority, estimates as many as 200 million rural migrant workers have left home to seek employment in towns or major urban areas. A survey released by the Council in March says the typical rural migrant worker is a 29-year-old male employed in construction or manufacturing. He puts in 8-9 hours per day, although one migrant in five works more than 10 hours daily. His monthly wage is 300-800 yuan (\$37-\$100); but only half of all migrant workers are paid on time.

The CLB cites a dual labor market in China. On the one hand, it says, most of the rural workers who migrate to towns and cities enter a "second-class labour market" of low-paying jobs and few benefits. They are prevented from entering "the other labour market of high-paying jobs [requiring] little physical labour and offering a full complement of social security benefits."

"In recent years, governments at all levels have been trying to break down the barriers which created this 'dual labour market,'" the CLB says. "However, the employment opportunities for rural migrant workers

have not improved much."

The CLB says just 551 of the 2,985 delegates to the NPC represented farmers and workers. By contrast, government officials held 968 seats, wielding both law-making and administrative authority. "Whether rural migrant workers are to gain protection of their labour rights will be determined by whether these administrators of the law in the NPC are in fact able to carry out the laws that they themselves have voted into being," the CLB says.

A Chinese academic specializing in labor relations and labor economics says China's labor laws provide inadequate protection to workers because of collusion between local government officials and the owners of privately-held companies.

Local governments sometimes grant privileges to private companies that "exceed legal restrictions," says Li Qi, a professor of labor economics at the Capital University of Economics and Business in Beijing. Those privileges create a kind of "tortoise shell" around private companies that insulates them from society and from punitive legal action, he explains.

Li says coal mine safety illustrates how government collusion with private companies puts workers' lives at risk. (See "China: Lax safety boosts coal mining fatalities" in *NewsNotes* July/August 2005.) Although the central government introduced new policies on coal mine safety in 2005, the number of serious coal mine accidents and deaths greatly increased over the previous year. Illegal collusion between government and private business "largely reduces the effectiveness of any of the central government's policies," he concludes.

Stronger enforcement of central government labor policies could benefit both rural migrant workers and the national economy. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security has announced a three-year action plan to implement State Council policies aimed at solving problems such as low wages and late salaries.

Meanwhile, a recurring labor shortage in China's southeastern coastal provinces of Guangdong, Fujian and Zhejiang has become acute since the Chinese Lunar New Year in February. Zhejiang Province alone is reportedly short some 500,000 workers, or about 35 percent of the total demand for labor. Observers suggest that to counter higher energy and transportation costs, industry resorted to its traditional practice of reducing workers' salaries and benefits. This time the tactic appears to have backfired.

## Nepal: From monarchy toward democracy?

*King Gyanendra's announcement April 21 that he would call parliament back into session raised hopes for an end to Nepal's decade-long insurgency and for progress toward restoring democracy. However, he did not immediately agree to protesters' demand for a constituent assembly to write a new constitution – which could limit the king's own powers or even eliminate Nepal's monarchy.*

A 10-year Maoist insurgency has claimed the lives of some 13,000 Nepalis, mostly civilians. Gyanendra dissolved the parliament in 2002. Last year he seized direct control of the government, saying it was necessary to end the insurgency and to clean up a corrupt political system. However, government troops were unable to make much progress against the Maoists, who control much of Nepal's mountainous countryside.

Nearly every one of the country's 75 districts has been affected by the fighting between the Maoists and government troops, further impoverishing Nepal's 28 million people. Nearly a third live below the poverty line, and life expectancy is 60 years. The insurgency is estimated to have 7,000 fulltime fighters and perhaps 25,000 militia supporters. However, many observers say the fighting has degenerated to a military stalemate.

Human Rights Watch (HRW, [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)) said Gyanendra's takeover of the government last year probably cost the monarchy some public support. The one-man rule failed to bring the insurgency any closer to resolution, and there was a general deterioration in the human rights situation. "The king has repeatedly subjected critical political activists, journalists, and human rights monitors to arbitrary arrest and censorship, only releasing detainees and relaxing restrictions under intense international pressure," HRW said.

In January 2006 the Maoists ended a four-month unilateral ceasefire, and casualties quickly began to mount. A crisis erupted April 6 when seven opposition parties launched a general strike to demand that the king restore democracy. Hundreds of students took to the streets, fighting the police and braving batons, tear gas and rubber bullets. At least 17 were killed and hundreds wounded in the demonstrations. Many more were placed under arrest.

After two weeks of unrest, U.S. Ambassador James Moriarty publicly warned that Gyanendra could lose his throne if he did not act quickly. "His time is running out," Moriarty said. "Ultimately the king will have to

leave if he doesn't compromise. And by 'ultimately' I mean sooner rather than later."

In a national telecast on April 21, Gyanendra capitulated to the protesters and asked the opposition parties to name a new prime minister. "We return the executive power of the country to the people," he said. "A meaningful exercise in democracy must be ensured with the activation of representative bodies through elections as soon as possible."

The announcement came hours after more than 100,000 pro-democracy protesters had defied a government shoot-on-sight curfew to rally on the outskirts of Kathmandu. Many demonstrators said they were encouraged but not totally convinced by the king's announcement. "We have won the battle, but we still must win the war," protester Grihendra Shrestha said.

U.S. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said in Washington, "We expect the king to live up to his words and allow the parties to form a government. The people of Nepal deserve a democratic government that can return stability and peace to their country. We urge all sides to refrain from violence to allow the restoration of democracy to take place swiftly and peacefully."

Gyanendra's announcement left the Maoists struggling over their response. After fighting the government for a decade, Maoist leader Prachanda initially dismissed the king's proclamation as "a sham and a conspiracy against the Nepali people" and called for the demonstrations to continue. After a few days, however, the Maoists declared a three-month unilateral ceasefire, saying they wanted to facilitate a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution. They also withdrew a blockade of Kathmandu.

Despite the ceasefire overture, at least one negotiator between the opposition parties and the insurgents said he remained cautious about the Maoists' intentions. Jhala Nath Khanal, himself a leader of the Communist Party of Nepal, said, "They talk about democracy now, but violence is a part of their philosophy."

But Maoists are also guarded in their outlook after battling the institution of the monarchy for ten years. Matrika Yadav, a Maoist leader imprisoned in Kathmandu, said the opposition parties might have been too eager to accept Gyanendra's invitation to reconvene parliament. "The parties were caught in his trap, against the will of the people," said Yadav, 48. "If they would have waited for a few more days, the downfall of the monarchy was inevitable."



## Iraq: Brzezinski calls U.S. "victory" unlikely

*A U.S. "victory" in Iraq is unlikely, and the U.S. should set a date soon to end the occupation – possibly by the end of this year, former presidential adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski says.*

Brzezinski, for four years President Jimmy Carter's national security advisor, assessed the situation in a recent address sponsored by the Center for American Progress in Washington, D.C.

"This is a war of attrition, and it is a war that I do not see us as winning," Brzezinski says. He agrees with the assessment of Paul Bremer, former U.S. civilian administrator in Iraq, that "Ours is a failed occupation." Brzezinski blames "a decision-making process that compounds errors, that involves a very narrow group of true believers, and that evades responsibility and accountability – for errors and even crimes."

"No one responsible for wrong judgments has been fired," he says. "No one responsible for setting in motion a chain of events that produced extraordinarily embarrassing crimes has been put on trial."

Brzezinski says the U.S. should set a date to terminate the occupation. "I think roughly at the end of this year should be the target date. ... It could be somewhat later, perhaps even somewhat sooner. I do not know," he says. "But I would think that within a year we should be able to complete an orderly disengagement."

He says the Bush administration's hope for an Iraqi national army is unlikely to be met. "Iraq is composed of Kurds and Arabs," he explains. "The Kurds have an army, and a rather good one actually, and are not going to be part of any Iraqi 'national army,' so that is already a pitfall. But beyond that there is, alas, the reality of the increasing split between the Sunnis and the Shiites and their reliance on militias that are sectarian as well as tribally based. They are not going to be a part of a 'national army' either. To speak of a national army as a serious political prospect is to engage in self denial."

Brzezinski says Iraq is suffering from two wars at the same time, with one stimulating the other. "One war is the insurgency against the occupier, and that seems to be gaining more sympathy from the public as time passes," he says. The other war is a sectarian conflict between the Shiites and the Sunnis, but he says "the U.S. umbrella, which in effect is designed to stifle these wars but is so poor that it perpetuates them, in a sense keeps these wars alive." [Some analysts believe that the political conflict between Shiites and Sunnis, in fact, is fostered by the U.S. See "The U.S. Role in Iraq's Sectarian

Violence" on the Foreign Policy in Focus website: <http://www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/3139>.]

Brzezinski says the U.S. could possibly end both of those wars if it put in enough troops – perhaps another 500,000. However, "we are not in a position to really increase the occupation force, unless we declare some state of national emergency and engage in actions which are simply politically not being seriously considered," he says.

To help bring about a U.S. withdrawal, Brzezinski says "I would ask the Iraqi leaders to ask us to leave." While some are openly opposed to the occupation and would do so, he says "others may be more ambivalent... And some, of course, would not wish to ask us to leave. And they would be the ones who would leave when we leave."

Brzezinski says U.S. domestic policy is inconsistent with its military presence in Iraq. "If anyone really seriously means that we are a nation at war, then surely we have to ask ourselves why we are reducing taxes for the rich," he says. "Why don't we have a war tax? Why don't we have national mobilization? Why don't we have a draft? Why don't we fire commanders that don't perform well in war or dismiss war planners that make fundamental errors?"

Brzezinski says those who initiated the U.S. engagement in Iraq are unable to look at alternative options "because of their stake in past misjudgments" and says, "If the president is serious in saying that our choices have become more difficult, I think it behooves him to widen the circle of decision-makers."

"The question is, can you really create civic peace through a military presence that produces a war of attrition, which is actually escalating in intensity," Brzezinski says. "I have much higher confidence in the maturity of the Iraqi people who over the years actually have developed an elite that's quite modern, and they're advanced more so than many other Muslim countries."

A complete transcript of Brzezinski's March 16 address can be found on the website of the Center for American Progress, [www.americanprogress.org](http://www.americanprogress.org)

*In September 2005 the Maryknoll leadership called on the U.S. to begin withdrawing its military troops from Iraq quickly but in a manner conducive to the well-being of the Iraqi people. Maryknoll further insisted that the U.S. pay for reconstruction and that contracts go to Iraqi workers and firms. The statement can be found at <http://www.maryknollogc.org/peace/mk-statement-iraq.htm>. See also the Declaration of Peace on page 25.*

## Africa: Challenging corruption, stolen wealth

*In early April, representatives of Transparency International's African chapters released the "Nairobi Declaration," calling for international action to support the recovery and repatriation of Africa's stolen wealth. See <http://www.transparency.org>.*

We, the representatives of Transparency International in seven African countries,

- Affirming the fundamental human right to development of all African peoples;
- Aware of the negative role that corruption has played in undermining Africa's fragile democracies and hindering her people's efforts to attain sustainable development;
- Noting the emergence of recent international instruments such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the African Union Convention for the Combating of and Prevention of Corruption; and other interventions aimed at creating a just global socio-economic order, including global debt cancellation campaigns, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative;
- Noting that despite some asset recovery successes several African countries are experiencing difficulties in obtaining appropriate mutual legal assistance in their endeavor to trace, seize, recover and repatriate assets and monies illegally appropriated and transferred abroad by their nationals and other collaborators;
- Aware that well over US\$140 billion has over the decades been illegally and corruptly appropriated from Africa, by politicians, soldiers, businesspersons and other leaders, and kept abroad in form of cash, stocks and bonds, real estate and other assets;
- Observing the commitments made by the G8 and other commissions on Africa;
- Persuaded that, with the co-operation of all relevant actors, Africa's stolen wealth is identifiable, traceable and potentially recoverable;
- Recalling the Nyanga Declaration of March 2001 by 11 Transparency International African Chapters

Hereby declare:

1. That it is imperative that African governments engender and demonstrate the political will to fight corruption in a meaningful way.

2. That corruption remains one of the primary hindrances to development in Africa. Thus, for as long as governments continue to pay mere lip service to anti-corruption reform, such development and, particularly,

the eradication of poverty as elaborated by the Millennium Development Goals will remain unattainable.

3. That African governments and the international community should as a matter of priority, ensure the ratification, domestication and implementation of the provisions of the UN Convention Against Corruption, the African Union Convention on the Combating and Prevention of Corruption, and the OECD Convention Against the Bribery of Foreign Public Officials.

4. That it is not only illegal but blatantly immoral that so much wealth stolen from Africa is allowed to circulate freely in the economies of some of the world's wealthiest nations in Europe, the Americas, the Middle East and diverse offshore havens.

5. That while the call for the cancellation of African debt is noble and deserving of full support, it is inherently inconsistent to call for the cancellation of Africa's debts while much of the money originally lent, is ODI-IOUS, and remains illegally invested or banked in privately held accounts abroad.

6. That it is unconscionable that individuals and corporations who are nationals of the OECD and the G8 are enjoying measures of impunity despite their corrupt practices in Africa.

7. That African governments and the international community should, as a matter of priority, expedite the tracing, recovery and repatriation of wealth stolen from African countries and transferred abroad, including sealing of all known loopholes, and requiring international cooperation from non-State actors such as corporations and financial institutions where there is reasonable cause to suspect illegal activity, and mandatory liquidation and repatriation of assets known to have been corruptly acquired.

8. That all international initiatives aimed at the promulgation of a more just global socio-economic order, including campaigns for debt cancellation, should include an explicit focus on recovering and repatriating assets stolen from developing countries as a necessary condition to the realization of a more just and fair global community.

9. That all countries should tighten their banking laws to ensure that moneys illicitly appropriated from African treasuries are not granted safe havens in banks or non-bank financial institutions operating in those countries.

10. That African representatives of Transparency International will lobby their governments for legislative reform to seal all known loopholes that allow the

illegal appropriation of public money from their treasuries and to punish the culprits, as well as to create frameworks for receiving recovered and repatriated moneys.

11. That TI African National Chapters meeting in Nairobi express their solidarity with anti-corruption activists and National Chapters that operate in difficult circumstances wherever they are.

## Horn of Africa: Drought spreads across region

*Deforestation and commercial exploitation of wetlands have brought about climate change and decreased rainfall on a massive scale across eastern Africa; and, if these harmful practices continue, millions of people could face starvation annually, warned Klaus Toepfer, retiring executive director of the UN Environment Program (UNEP) and director-general of the UN office at Nairobi, in an interview with the UN's Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN, 3/14/06).*

More frequent and more severe droughts are likely to blight the Horn of Africa as global warming increases and commercial activities continue to destroy the environment's ability to bounce back from dry spells, leading environmental experts have cautioned. Deforestation and exploitation of wetlands have brought about climate change and decreased rainfall on a massive scale across eastern Africa. Roughly 62 percent of precipitation occurs over land as a result of evapotranspiration from lakes and wetlands and dense vegetation, in particular forests, pumping water held in the soil into the air. In comparison, only around 38 percent of precipitation is generated over oceans and seas.

Behind all this is the impact of global climate change, the result of burning fossil fuels. This is already triggering more extreme weather events including droughts, floods and storm surges. If these harmful practices continue, millions of people could face starvation annually. Global warming has exacerbated the situation: According to a March 2006 report from the University of Cape Town, global warming could cause a 25 percent drop in surface water across Africa by 2100.

Between 2000 and 2003, Kenya lost more than 7,000 hectares of forest cover, drastically reducing the environment's natural moisture production and leading to the current dry spell. Deforestation has also caused soil erosion, which in turn has caused a build-up of silt at the Masinga dam, 100 kilometers northwest of Nairobi, which provides half of Kenya's electricity. It is estimated that clearing out the silt would require 1,000 large trucks to work nonstop for six years. Wanton destruction of woodlands across southern Somalia to feed an unregulated international export trade in charcoal is leaving

whole districts empty of vegetation. In Ethiopia, as across the Horn of Africa, poverty drives subsistence farmers to chop wood where they find it.

The environmental impact of regional deforestation has increased the frequency of drought in eastern Africa. Whereas drought used to hit the region once every five to seven years, these conditions now occur more often. The cumulative effect of successive droughts prevents the environment from bouncing back and erodes communities' coping mechanisms.

The International Research Institute for Climate and Society estimated that rainfall across the Horn of Africa between March and May 2006 was likely to be between 40 percent and 50 percent below normal. Results from a University of Cape Town study published in March 2006 have shown that even a relatively small drop in rainfall can have a powerful effect on the amount of precipitation that ends up in rivers and lakes. According to the study, even a 10 percent drop in rain in a marginal, semi-arid area like much of the Horn of Africa's lowlands can lead to rivers running dry, lakes shrinking and wetlands withering.

However, the researchers also found that the situation may improve. Climate-change models suggested rainfall across parts of East Africa could increase in the coming century, which would have the effect of exponentially increasing water reserves. However, that prediction is only likely to come true if vital rainmaking machinery is preserved by slowing deforestation rates.

According to UNEP's Toepfer, reforms must be put in place now to stop the cycle of drought and famine. National governments, under international pressure if necessary, should introduce workable policies to halt deforestation, to repair damage to forest and wetland areas and to stop wasteful use of scarce resources. Micro-credit schemes can bolster the ability of a subsistence farmer to weather tough times, and drought-proof crop strains should be introduced in areas that are likely to be prone to repeated dry spells. Finally, investment in infrastructure, like roads and electrification regionally, would allow farmers to increase their wealth and lift themselves out of poverty and cut their dependence on wood for charcoal and heat.

## Zimbabwe: "We all fall down"

NewsNotes has carried a series of articles on the evolving socio-political situation in Zimbabwe. The following analysis is extracted by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Merwyn DeMello from an article by Mary Ndlovu, a human rights activist in Zimbabwe.

In 2006, is there any hope for Zimbabwe? Every year since 2000, Zimbabweans have wondered: "Will this be it, will this be the year when it all ends, when Humpty Dumpty finally totters off the wall?" And if it is, what will it mean for each one of us, and for the nation as a whole - healing, restoration and return to "normality," or deepened chaos, insecurity and catastrophe? Can Zimbabwe be put back together again?

... [I]nflation has just reached the official figure of 782 percent. Imagine the daily trauma suffered by the working father who realizes he cannot pay for medicine for his sick child, the student in his final year who cannot raise the 1,000 percent increase in fees imposed mid-year, the pensioner forced to sell his possessions in order to eat.

And what of the estimated 80 percent who do not work? A thriving informal sector in which hundreds of thousands of people managed to survive through trading, cottage industry, deal-making, and personal services, was wiped out in June and July 2005 by brutal police attacks. A large percentage of them also lost their homes in the assault on the urban poor.

Is this the "meltdown" that the commentators have been forecasting? While this is the question occupying most Zimbabweans, the more interesting question to political analysts and observers is what various actors on the stage are doing about the situation. Is there any hope of a solution emerging from this complete disaster?

The current band of government ministers are fully occupied by two major activities: amassing wealth and staying in power. The party, ZANU-PF, must stay in power for two reasons: one is clearly to continue appropriating the little remaining wealth of the country for their own personal use. The other is to avoid the inevitable unpleasant consequences of their past and present illegal activities, should another government take power.

But staying in power takes a lot of effort when economic collapse has made the people so clearly discontented and desperate. It requires energy and re-

sources to be channeled not to solve the problems created, but to systems of control: police, army and youth militia need support; tens of thousands must be given benefits for infiltrating "opposition" organizations and informing on others.



Zimbabweans line up to vote

What is the government doing about the economic meltdown? The fact is that as long as government is not able to restore productive activity and seriously tackle corruption, then the economy cannot be rescued. Inflation is not the number one enemy, it is merely a symptom, produced by both corruption and absence of production. Corruption cannot be tackled because it

is the life-blood of the patronage system which keeps ZANU-PF in power, and production cannot be restored without major injections of foreign investment, impossible without a return to protected property rights sustained by the rule of law. Government is meanwhile hopelessly divided on whether to retreat from the brink.

The opposition has a golden opportunity to capitalize on ZANU-PF's paralysis and the people's desperation and misery. But how? The normal election route has been closed by fraudulent manipulation. Calls for mass protests have in the past met with a poor response from the people. And the opposition itself is now paralyzed by division brought about by a split in the party.

But the split itself does not necessarily mean that political opposition is hamstrung. If the two factions can get over the divorce and allow each other to go their separate ways with renewed vigor, it could even be a positive development if they desist from attacking and frustrating each other and get on with the real struggle.

Many feel that now the time is ripe, and this time street protests may be successful. Some sections of civil society are also waking up to the desperation of the people and looking at ways to make a greater impact on government. The National Constitutional Assembly, Women of Zimbabwe Arise and the national students' organizations are the only organizations that have so far succeeded in putting meaningful numbers in the streets to protest. But there are other stirrings. A new Christian alliance has been formed from churches radicalized

by the experience of tending to those affected by *Murambatsvina* [the government's campaign to forcibly clear slum areas across the country. According to the UN, it has affected at least 2.4 million people.] Several meetings have taken place grouping various civic organizations and churches to find a collective way forward. If these combine with the efforts of both factions of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), then perhaps a hitherto doubtful populace will come onto the streets in support.

And if they do? What is the mechanism whereby mass street protests lead to a collapse of the ZANU-PF government? One of the reasons people so far have been reluctant is that they can't envisage how mass protests will achieve their goals. Some leaders seem to believe that if masses of people get into the streets on a continuing basis, government will have no alternative but to capitulate and agree to a constitutional conference. A new constitution will be devised, followed by free and fair elections which will replace ZANU-PF.

ZANU-PF will only give up and run away in one circumstance: if the law enforcement agents and soldiers on which they depend refuse orders to crush the protests. The economy can meltdown or blow up, but ZANU-PF will only be defeated when meltdown strikes their own instruments of repression. Is this going to happen? We can't yet know. The upper echelons of the services have been brought on board the ZANU-PF train with the normal perks of patronage, especially farms, but there are signs of serious discontent in the lower ranks of the army and police, especially over their low salaries. How long will it take for the constables, the privates, the sergeants to decide that their interests are better served by listening to the people rather than

their bosses? No one knows, but when they do, that is when ZANU-PF's moment of truth will have arrived.

But even if ZANU-PF does give up, that does not automatically mean the battle is won. The chaos of a government collapse in the midst of economic meltdown and shortages of goods does not necessarily lead to the restoration of democratic practice. The army could easily fracture into rival factions or into gangs under political and military ZANU-PF warlords who look after their own interests and live off the people. We are in a very dangerous situation, and anyone calling for mass protests has the obligation to have a clear strategy for translating them into valid solutions. Certainly a concerted effort of all democratic forces is required, whether they be political parties, civic organizations or churches, but it will not be the easy walk to freedom that some would have us believe.

Once again we wait - wait to see what economic meltdown looks like and how many can survive it, wait to find out whether enough Zimbabweans are prepared to take to the streets to make their discontent known, wait for the inevitable intensified repression. And then wait to see what happens after that - a political meltdown to match the economic? A surrender by the government and turning over to some interim body to conduct new elections under a new constitution, or a fragmentation and disintegration into civil conflict?

The cracking of an egg does not always hatch a chick. Humpty Dumpty could not be put together again; perhaps Zimbabwe will not be so easy to put together again either. The tension of expectation is building as the people's misery becomes unsustainable. Will this be the year, and if it is, will it hold hope for the future, or will we simply all fall down together?

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## Sudan: Darfur crisis worsens

*"Last month, in the town of Mershing, South Darfur, there was chaos and carnage. On a scorching day in February, 400 Janjaweed militiamen attacked, firing indiscriminately on civilians, destroying homes, and looting livestock. Eight hours after the initial onslaught, the Janjaweed returned for a second round of mayhem, assaulting women and children and looting the town's main market. Following a terror-filled night, the 55,000 residents of Mershing fled for their lives. Thirteen infants were trampled to death and 220 children separated from their families in the exodus. The day after, here in Washington, a senior State Department official told journalists that 'there isn't large-scale orga-*

*nized violence taking place' in Darfur."* (John Prendergast, senior adviser to the International Crisis Group (ICG) and Colin Thomas-Jensen, ICG Research and Advocacy Officer for Africa, [www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com), March 17, 2006)

Recent reports confirm a further spike in violence in Darfur and in neighboring Chad, as the government of Sudan and the Janjaweed militias continue to target civilians. In a recent press release, Africa Action noted numerous accounts of new attacks on villages and camps, and an increase in the number of displaced people who are inaccessible to humanitarian agencies. As the rainy season approaches, the organization em-

phasized the urgent need for international protection for vulnerable civilians and humanitarian operations.

The 7,000-member Africa Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) has not been able to provide the level of protection necessary and has been unable to monitor adequately the ceasefire, which has now disintegrated. In March meetings, the Africa Union extended the AMIS mandate to September 30, 2006, but failed to amend it for better protection of civilians and made no provision for either more African or UN troops to come into Darfur during that time.

Observers blamed the AU for deferring to the Government of Sudan's opposition to a stronger UN peacekeeping force in Darfur. Salih Booker of Africa Action said, "By deferring to the Government of Sudan on the timing and the terms of a UN operation in Darfur, the African Union and the larger international community are essentially granting veto power to the very author of this genocide. It is deeply disturbing to consider the degree to which this dynamic, and Khartoum's increasing audacity, have been facilitated by Washington's relationship with the government of Sudan and by the successive failures of the international community to hold Khartoum accountable for the crisis in Darfur."

According to Prendergast and Thomas-Jensen of the ICG, Khartoum's counterinsurgency strategy has caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people and displaced two million more, but the Bush administration is hesitant to push the Government of Sudan too hard and risk jeopardizing Sudanese cooperation on counterterrorism. Many of the Sudanese military intelligence officials who offer information to the CIA are the principal perpetrators of atrocities in Darfur, responsible for arming, training, and unleashing the Janjaweed on innocent civilians.

There has, however, been some hopeful movement in Washington. In both chambers of Congress amendments were approved to the FY2006 supplemental appropriations bills adding \$50 million for Darfur peacekeeping to the \$123 million requested by the president, for a total of \$173 million in the peacekeeping operations (PKO) account.

In the coming weeks, the UN Security Council will



discuss a range of options for a proposed UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur as well as the possibility of sanctions against some individuals involved in crimes against humanity in Darfur.

On March 24, the UN Security Council passed a resolution calling upon the Secretary-General to speed up the planning process for a transition to a UN peacekeeping force in Darfur. The Council also requested the Secretariat to formally present those plans by April 24, and that the plans include options on how the UN could provide additional assistance to the African Union force until such time as the transition can be completed.

However, Khartoum has been sufficiently encouraged by the weak response of the international community that it has already announced that it has no intention of allowing a UN or any other international protection force into Darfur.

The international community with active involvement of the U.S. must act swiftly in what Jan Egeland, head of UN humanitarian operations, calls the "test case for the world for having no more Rwandas and no more massive loss of innocent lives" to:

- provide the necessary financial and technical assistance to the AU through at least September 2006, and to help AMIS implement the key recommendations for internal improvements outlined in a December 2005 Joint Assessment Mission report and affirmed by the AU on March 10;
- persuade the AU and the UN Security Council to authorize the immediate deployment of a stabilization force of at least 5,000 troops as part of a phased transition to a UN mission to be completed in October 2006, to focus on monitoring the Chad-Sudan border and deterring major cross-border attacks, and on bolstering AMIS's ability to protect civilians in the Tawila-Graida corridor; and
- persuade the Security Council to authorize immediate planning for a UN peacekeeping force of at least double the present size of AMIS, equipped to fulfill a more serious mission, provided with an appropriately stronger mandate, and ready to take over full responsibility on October 1, 2006.

## Water and the community of life

*Over the past year, the staff of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, along with our integrity of creation advisory committee, in consultation with Maryknoll missionaries around the world, worked to create the following statement on the sacredness and significance of water. For additional copies, please contact the MOGC office.*

In almost every community in every country where Maryknoll missionaries live and work, water is of urgent concern. With many other people of faith and good will, we are searching for a deeper understanding of our “sister” water and are calling for a more just distribution of water for all creation and its peoples.

Many in the Maryknoll family are already working specifically for water justice and ecological integrity:

In **Bolivia**, Maryknoll lay missionaries are engaged with neighbors in El Alto to stop the privatization of water services and have joined with people from all parts of the country to form a National Assembly for the Defense of Water, Basic Services and Life.

In **Panama**, the Maryknoll Sisters are pressing for action on a growing threat, hidden for the most part from local people, to drain an essential, large fresh water lake in order to expand the Panama Canal and facilitate mega-ship traffic.

In **Tanzania**, the available water supply is under serious strain due to severe, endemic drought, the rapid growth in population and increased cattle raising. To improve the drinking water supply, especially for health reasons, a Maryknoll priest, working with local villagers and District officials, has helped build windmills to pump clean water from sandy river beds into village centers, plus small dams and water catchments to hold the scant rainwater that falls. Another has encouraged the planting of trees in a desperately dry area to restore the water cycle and improve local agriculture.

In the **Philippines**, water is an important theme for study and reflection at the Maryknoll Sisters’ Ecological Sanctuary in Baguio.

In **Kenya**, a Maryknoll priest has set up irrigation projects to help small farmers grow better crops. He has also assisted in projects to dig boreholes and wells to bring clean water to the slum areas around Nairobi and provide water for local schools run by Kenyan Sisters.

In **Nepal**, where water is abundant and even exported to India, Maryknoll Sisters point out that it is

neither utilized well nor conserved due to many local and government problems.

Others have listened with care to the wisdom of indigenous peoples about water.

Through our work, our listening and our reflections, we have come to believe:

**WATER** is its own reality, a dimension of planet Earth, ancient and life-giving. It claims its own “right to be” by the very fact that it is! Oceans probably arose over four billion years ago from the condensation of the vapor in the atmosphere. All the water now in circulation has been here since the Planet was first formed, no more, no less. So water, having maintained its integrity over eons of time, has its own story to tell and plays its own role in the on-going cosmic venture. Life in all its expressions has emerged from water. It is generous gift and gracious friend. St. Francis named it our “sister.” To honor water in and of itself is to go deep into cosmic origins and the very mystery of creation.

**WATER** is the common heritage of all creation as it is an essential dimension of the journey of life. No single species nor any region of Earth, no economic class nor political party, can claim water as its own. Its cycles and seasons have nurtured civilizations from the beginning. Its deep mysteries have inspired spiritual practices in all the great religious traditions. In the presence of water, all creatures and all creation stand in need, side-by-side, dependent and grateful.

**WATER** is an “endangered species,” its purity, nurturing power, free-flow and availability for all under attack. Due to human activity, water is being poisoned by massive dumpings, polluted by excessive run-off. On every continent, it is dammed and re-directed, robbed from the poor, wasted by the rich and ignored as an essential element that belongs to all creation. The disparities between those for whom it is readily available and those who trek long miles to obtain a bucket are all too apparent. The competition only increases as the supply diminishes. Wars over access to water are already being waged, and the threat of more is on the horizon.

**WATER** is on the world agenda today as an “economic good,” a commodity that can be owned by powerful entities and distributed according to the highest bidder. Under this rubric, the privatization of water has grown into an immense industry and threatens communities worldwide. Bottled water, a privatization



privilege for the powerful, has become ubiquitous. It is urgent to explore practices where public water management is accountable to the people and where the common good of the entire community, human and other-than-human, is served.

**WATER is both a sacred gift and a central symbol in all religious traditions.** For Christians, water is essential to the initiation ritual that invites a new person into the beloved community of all life and into the Christian family. The Bible abounds with water references, as do the sacred writings of all religions. Perhaps no other dimension of Earth life has such spiritual meaning as water. When water is neither pure nor clean its ability to carry such symbolic weight is threatened.

**WATER concerns are front and center across the globe as enlightened peoples awaken to this crisis.** Community groups and governments, international bodies and non-governmental organizations, scientists, ecologists, marine biologists — all are raising alarm signals and moving aggressively to put remedial policies in place. The task is monumental and urgent.

*To understand water in this light, as a member of the community of life on Earth, and to speak out of that truth challenges our assumptions, our thinking, our language, our practices and our policies. We struggle to be faithful to the change in consciousness this demands as we address this extremely important issue.*

## **Our way forward**

Studies and the experiences of Maryknollers around the world make it abundantly clear that the future of our sister water and the future of planet earth are inextricably linked. This sobering fact, the essential role that water plays in the life of the whole earth community, faces us all. It will not grow less urgent or disappear with a single well-designed plan or program initiated in one or another spot on the planet. Piecemeal repairs will not work unless they fit into the life-support systems of the whole — specifically, into the integrated system that water comprises throughout the earth.

Leaders at every level of society, communities and individuals must awaken to the urgency of this matter and the magnitude of the task before us. We need a complete transformation from a human community acting as despoilers of water to a worldwide community acting as lovers and friends of water.

As Maryknoll embraces this new vision of community and offers its gifts to help address the many problems that face our sister water on all continents, three principles have emerged to guide us. Other principles may well unfold as we continue to move forward.

## **Principle #1: For the common good**

In every instance where water is endangered and Maryknoll is engaged in addressing the matter, we should be guided by Catholic social teaching on the common good, namely, that the “goods of the earth are meant for all.” No one person or group, no single species, has exclusive claims on earth’s bounty. Historically, we have understood this teaching to apply solely to the human community, i.e., that the common good demands the same rights to earth’s abundance for the poor as for the wealthy. It is this teaching that has been the foundation of our work over the years to ensure that the rights of the poor and their ability to carry on in a viable manner are protected.

However, as we better understand the full implications of our being members of a single, sacred earth community, we realize that the notion of the common good must be expanded to include all other expressions of earth life as well, human and other-than-human. We now grasp the reality that we do not exist in isolation from the rest of the natural world. Therefore, our concern for the common good must reach out and incorporate the “good” of water and forests, of wetlands and meadows, of oceans and atmosphere, of the bees and the birds, of plant and animal life ... all must be within the embrace of the common good. In fact, we might better broaden the expression to speak of the “common good and the good of the commons.” So, as we engage water issues in the future, we uphold this first principle and stand with all of creation in seeking to ensure the rights of the full community to this essential life source, sister water.

## **Principle #2: Participation**

Over the years, we have taken seriously the Church’s social teaching that people have not only the right but also the responsibility to participate in shaping the institutions that control their lives. Whether in the political, economic, religious, educational, or social realm, participation is to be guaranteed to all those who are impacted by the policies, laws, actions of these systems. How often over the years has Maryknoll stood with communities, especially of people who are poor, in their demands for a place at the table where laws and rules that they must obey are created! We have raised our voices and given our energies to shape more just and inclusive societies.

But now, in light of our broadened sense of the earth community, our call for participation must go beyond the demands of the human community to ensure that the rights of the natural world are also represented at the table. Today we are being called to speak out, not

only with impoverished people, but also for the waters of the Hudson, the Ganges and the Amazon Rivers, the Great Lakes of Africa and the U.S., the ocean waters as they flow freely throughout the planet. We join with guardians of the Appalachian mountains, the Serengeti, Indonesian forests, the Arctic glaciers, the great white bear, the disappearing songbird ... all those who are speaking up in the name of the voiceless members of earth community, expanding the table and broadening the debate into new realms of consciousness and concern. Our work with sister water moves us beyond social participation to include ecological participation.

### Principle #3: Accountability

In all that we as Maryknoll undertake to address concerns about water, the need for accountability is essential at every level and among all who are involved. This principle is of critical importance to the integrity of any undertaking. To insist that leadership answer to the people and the full community of life is non-negotiable. It requires continual consultation with those who have an investment in the outcome of the effort; the frequent testing of our own assumptions and plans; and an openness to the wisdom and insight of others. Accountability to the local community can restore the trust and confidence of the people and guarantee an outcome for the good of all creation.

### Conclusion

In local communities around the world and at an

international level,

- we will continue to nurture a new understanding of our relationship with sister water;
- we will support practices and policies appropriate to that understanding;
- we will promote “the common good/the good of the commons,” social and ecological participation and accountability at every level to the full community of life.

Many partners, faith-based organizations and others, have produced excellent resources on water. Among them are :

- National Catholic Rural Life Conference: [www.ncrlc.com/water\\_commons.html](http://www.ncrlc.com/water_commons.html)
- La Red Vida: [www.laredvida.org](http://www.laredvida.org)
- UNESCO: [www.unesco.org/water/](http://www.unesco.org/water/)
- Friends of the Earth: [www.foe.org/index.php](http://www.foe.org/index.php)
- International Water Working Group: [www.citizen.org/cmep/water](http://www.citizen.org/cmep/water)
- “Twice as Thirsty: Women, Children and Water,” a document from Church World Service: [www.churchworldservice.org/pdf\\_files/EA/womenwater.pdf](http://www.churchworldservice.org/pdf_files/EA/womenwater.pdf)
- Theological reflection on water by Dr. Heather Eaton, KAIROS (Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives): [www.kairoscanada.org/e/ecology/water/reflectionWater.asp](http://www.kairoscanada.org/e/ecology/water/reflectionWater.asp)

These links and additional resources are available on the website of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns [www.maryknollogc.org](http://www.maryknollogc.org) (Ecology section).

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## Water: Activists shift debate on privatization

*Nick Buxton, a British activist working on trade and water issues in La Paz, Bolivia, attended the World Water Forum (WWF), held in March in Mexico, and provided the following article for NewsNotes. Buxton's website is [www.nickbuxton.info](http://www.nickbuxton.info).*

During the opening session of the 2006 World Water Forum, a global event that takes place every three years to develop global policy on water, Jose Luis Luege Tamargo, Mexico's Secretary for the Environment and Natural Resources, said: “No one is trying to impose privatization here. This forum is about debate and dialogue about the solutions.”

But it seemed the forum was all about promoting privatization. A quick glance around the other stands and a browse through the program of company-backed workshops suggested that corporate objectives contin-

ued to dominate the agenda of the World Water Forum.

Perhaps most indicative of this was the fact that the head of the World Water Council (<http://www.worldwatercouncil.org/>), the conference's organizer, is Loïc Fauchon, director of a subsidiary of the French private water utility Suez which has faced popular resistance against exorbitant water rates and poor quality service in many developing countries.

Predictably, the only available water inside the forum was Cielo, a bottled mineral water supplied by Coca-Cola, which is currently under attack in South India for unsustainable extraction of groundwater which has led to withering crops and loss of business for farmers.

Yet behind the glossy stands and brochures, there was growing evidence in Mexico that it wasn't all business as usual.

The International Forum on the Defense of Water (IFDW), a parallel gathering organized by civil society activists from around the world, frequently grabbed headlines. On March 16, the WWF's opening day, 20,000 people marched against the Forum's pro-privatization stance. Activists disrupted the Forum's proceedings on several occasions unfurling banners and chanting, "Water is a right, not a commodity." (Read the IFDW's joint declaration on water at <http://www.tni.org/water-docs/ngodecl.htm>)

Perhaps most significantly, conference attendees frequently were forced to deny to the press that they held a pro-privatization stance. Also, delegates attempted in vain to defend their failure to name water as a human right in their declaration. The *New York Times* captured the declining support and confidence of the pro-privatizers with a headline reading, "At World Forum support erodes for private water management." (3/20/06)

Meanwhile, activists discussed not only resistance to water privatization but also alternatives and experiences of developing public and accountable water utilities. The thrust of their proposals received the backing of a UN Committee on Water and Sanitation that advocated public-public partnerships as the way to deliver drinking water for all.

Within the forum, campaigners found allies as the Bolivian government, represented by new Minister of Water Abel Mamani, pushed an alternative declaration which said that water was a fundamental right for all living beings, that it should be withdrawn from free trade and investment agreements, and that the forum should be made more inclusive. Abel commented, "Our role as human beings is to take care of our environment, and for this reason water cannot be treated as a commodity – because when it is, we are not taking care of the environment; we are taking care of our wallets."

The alternative declaration received the official backing of several countries including Venezuela, Uruguay and Cuba, as well as behind-the-scenes support from some other governments. It was dismissed as "disrespectful and discourteous" by Loïc Fauchon, but his defensiveness could not hide the fact that Bolivia was giving voice to a turning point in resistance against water



*Tanzanian activist Andrew Mushi at anti-water privatization march in Mexico City, March 16, 2006/Photo courtesy of World Development Movement, [www.wdm.org.uk](http://www.wdm.org.uk)*

privatization. What was once a seemingly impossible fight by activists has now become the official policy of several governments.

The ground-shift represented in Mexico is remarkable. In the early 1990s, water privatization was sold as the answer to the lack of drinking water by institutions like the World Bank and IMF and the international aid community, who touted that privatization would bring much-needed foreign investment.

The reality was that it brought very little extra money but invariably led to sharp increases in water rates and slight increases in service. In the impoverished city of El Alto, Bolivia the water utility was privatized as a condition for World Bank debt relief in 1997 and handed over to a Suez subsidiary. Suez was guaranteed 13 percent profit, but only provided five percent of total investments in the infrastructure, failed to

meet even limited commitments to extend the network, and charged network connection rates equivalent to five months salary for the average El Alto resident.

During the forum in Mexico, Bolivia officially called on the World Trade Organization to withdraw water from trade negotiations and said it was pulling out offers made in services by previous governments. "We are trying to forge a new humane and sustainable society based on alternative policies on water, services, agriculture and so on. However, free trade agreements lock in and enforce one economic model which is the same model that has failed our country and especially the poor for so many years," says Pablo Solón, an adviser to the Bolivian Water Ministry. "Bolivia can't fight these imposed agreements on its own. It will need the solidarity of citizens from around the world."

### **Action suggestions:**

Find out who controls water in your local community. Ensure it is in local hands under democratic and transparent management to safeguard against privatization. If it is in private hands, contact Food and Water Watch to find out how to take back control. Find out about the campaign to withdraw water from free trade agreements ([www.waternotforsale.org](http://www.waternotforsale.org))

Join the Bolivia Solidarity Network. Visit [www.boliviasolidarity.org](http://www.boliviasolidarity.org) and join their e-list.

## UN: Review of HIV/AIDS Declaration of Commitment

*More than 25 years after it was first identified, approximately 8,500 people still die every day as a result of HIV/AIDS; new infections are on the rise in many countries. The World Health Organization estimates that only one in five people who need AIDS medicines receive them, while the growth of the epidemic is outstripping the resources of already indebted and struggling countries.*

Among the international efforts to combat the pandemic, one of the eight Millennium Goals formulated at the 2000 Millennium Summit was to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. In the spring of 2001, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan proposed a Global Fund for receiving and disbursing contributions “dedicated to the battle against HIV/AIDS and other diseases.” In June of that year, 189 heads of state and government representatives came together at the UN in an unprecedented special session around HIV/AIDS, the first time that the UN had dealt with a health issue at that level. At that session, all member states of the General Assembly signed on to a “Declaration of Commitment,” which established guidelines and target dates for establishing frameworks for national policy and strategies (by 2003) and the implementation of programs of prevention and care, as well as strategies for increasing resources and monitoring progress.

Now, five years later, from June 2-6 the UN will hold a General Assembly Review and High Level Meeting for a comprehensive review of progress made achieving the targets set out in 2001. In addition to the official review of guidelines met by member states, this Assembly offers an important opportunity for NGOs, faith-based organizations, business groups and others to participate in the discussion.

The format of the meetings also allows for significant NGO participation through a civil society hearing, as well as panels and roundtables that include states and civil society. In addition to the actual meetings, significant efforts have been made to include large numbers of NGOs, beyond organizations accredited with ECOSOC (UN Economic and Social Council). In January 2006, a process was put into place for any interested NGOs to apply for a special accreditation; by March almost 800 organizations received word that they were approved for participation in the Review.



*Photo by Sean Sprague, courtesy of Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers*

However, other areas have not been so easily resolved. During the application process for special accreditation for this Review, countries could review the lists of organizations and not approve them for accreditation. Initially, the South African and Namibian national delegations rejected applications from several organizations, including the well-known Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and the AIDS Law Project, which have successfully brought the issue of access to

AIDS medicines to the forefront of the South African AIDS epidemic. Eventually, the South African government reversed its decision, and actually invited TAC's Secretary General Siphon Mthathi himself to attend. He responded in writing that since the AIDS Law Project was not included, and since he officially acts in the name of TAC, he did not feel he could attend the meeting. At this writing, there is no news on the Namibian

NGOs that were excluded.

In addition, there is a serious question of the travel ban for people living with HIV or AIDS (PLWA) to enter the U.S. While the U.S. has offered a temporary lifting of the ban, this would cause future problems for person living with HIV because his/her data would be taken at Immigration and held on file; should s/he attempt to return in the future, s/he would be refused entry. In addition, the ban clearly discriminates against PLWAs because of the disease. The Dutch NGOs are appealing to their Minister of Foreign Affairs to appeal to the U.S. government to totally lift the ban.

In the midst of the difficulties and the myriad arrangements being made in order to bring hundreds of people to this Review, there have been many suggestions about how civil society organizations can become involved. Some of them include: attempt to join or advocate for NGO representation on one's country delegation; collaborate with other NGOs on a common strategy for representation or the preparation of a shadow paper; contact accredited NGOs to channel concerns to the UNGASS; and prepare local/country activities for the AIDS Week of Action, including contacting local and national media for dissemination of the activities and the news from the UN during the Review. These and other suggestions and information can be found at ICASO ([www.icaso.org](http://www.icaso.org)), UNAIDS ([www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)), Ecumenical AIDS Alliance ([www.e-alliance.ch/ungassreview.jsp](http://www.e-alliance.ch/ungassreview.jsp)) and Stop AIDS, Keep the Promise ([www.ungasshiv.org](http://www.ungasshiv.org))

## UN: Human Rights Council created

Some of the recent calls to reform the United Nations have focused on the system that addresses human rights issues and violations. Since 1946, these issues were handled by the High Commission on Human Rights (UNHCHR), headquartered in Geneva, which met annually (most recently from March 13-April 21).

In an attempt to make its human rights work even more effective, the UN General Assembly took the historic step to create a Human Rights Council, which will replace the Commission on Human Rights in June. The General Assembly approved the new body with 170 votes; four nations voted against its creation (the U.S., Israel, the Marshall Islands and Palau), and three nations abstained (Venezuela, Iran and Belarus).

The Human Rights Council, to be composed of 47 member states, also will be based in Geneva; will hold no fewer than three sessions per year (including a main session) for a total period of no less than 10 weeks; and will answer directly to the General Assembly. Also, the Council will hold special sessions when necessary by a request of a Council member with the support of one-third of the Council's membership. Elections of the first members of the new Human Rights Council are scheduled to take place on May 9, and the first meeting will be

convened in June.

The new Council will have the obligation to ensure the observation of the following treaties, established by the Human Rights Commission: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the Convention Against Torture, and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on The Rights of the Child; and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Following the General Assembly's adoption of the Council on March 15, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said, "Now the real work begins. The true test of the Council's credibility will be the use that Member States make of it. If, in the weeks and months ahead, they act on the commitments they have given in this resolution, I am confident that the Council will breathe new life into all our work for human rights, and thereby help to improve the lives of millions of people throughout the world."

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## Maryknoll leadership statement on U.S. immigration

*The following statement was approved in March by the Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers General Council, Maryknoll Sisters Congregational Leadership Team, and the Maryknoll Lay Missioners Leadership Team. For copies in Spanish, contact the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

Every day, in every corner of the planet, women and men walk across national borders to find work, to find shelter, to find safety, to reunite with their families. From Zimbabwe to Thailand to Guatemala to the U.S.-Mexico border, Maryknoll missioners often interact with people on the move. We know their names and have heard their pleas for justice.

Our charism as Catholic missioners calls us to emphasize global solidarity. We respect the U.S.' obligation to keep its citizens safe, but we resist short-sighted, misguided and pitiless methods that do not provide authentic security, but rather foment fear and distrust.

As Maryknoll missioners, we have observed first-

hand the economic "push" factors in sending countries that endanger lives, families and cultures. We understand flight from violence and war. We implore U.S. lawmakers to consider the multi-layered dimensions of the migration issue when contemplating just immigration policies.

As Maryknoll missioners, we deplore the fear of the "other" that is embedded in these anti-migrant laws. We applaud Los Angeles' Roger Cardinal Mahony for his willingness to defy civil law in favor of a higher law that focuses upon the basic human rights of immigrants.

As Maryknoll missioners, we feel compelled to join the chorus of voices who are calling on Congress to reject any legislation that not only criminalizes undocumented persons in this country but also those who provide them with humanitarian aid. These potential laws violate the U.S. identity as a gathering place for all the world's peoples; these laws contradict a deeply felt national adage which announces that the U.S. will receive the poor, the tired, the huddled masses.

## Arms control: Embargoes systematically violated

*From June 27 through July 7, 2006 the nations of the world will gather at the UN Review Conference on Small Arms to assess progress on implementation of the 2001 UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. A recent report by the Control Arms Campaign ([www.controlarms.org](http://www.controlarms.org)) highlights one aspect of the problem. The Control Arms Campaign is a joint initiative by Amnesty International, Oxfam International and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA). The campaign aims to reduce arms proliferation and misuse and to convince governments to introduce a binding arms trade treaty.*

In its report, the Control Arms Campaign states that every one of the 13 UN arms embargoes imposed in the last decade has been violated repeatedly. And despite the fact that hundreds of embargo breakers have been named in UN reports, only a handful have been prosecuted successfully.

According to the report, UN investigative teams monitoring the embargoes are given woefully inadequate resources and time; despite UN mandatory arms embargoes being legally binding under international law, many states have not even made violating an embargo a criminal offence; arms export, import and freight documents are routinely faked and state officials often cover up arms transfers; and UN peacekeepers are sometimes not trained to adequately record markings on weapons, while UN missions do not have adequate means to monitor ports of entry in embargoed zones.

Beyond enforcement failures, between 1990 and 2001 only eight of 57 conflicts had UN arms embargoes imposed at all and when UN embargoes were enacted,

that generally happened after a conflict had begun.

As the UN Review Conference on Small Arms approaches, Control Arms campaigners are appealing to the Security Council for states to strengthen the enforcement of UN embargoes and for a number of new measures, including an international arms trade treaty. This treaty would enable governments to act in unison to control strictly conventional arms transfers, thereby creating the conditions for UN arms embargoes to be respected properly. An arms trade treaty also would provide a broader framework to prevent weapons from being sold before wars start or human rights abuses reach their peak. Since the Campaign began in October 2003, over 45 countries have stated their support for such a treaty.

Control Arms campaigners from around the world are preparing for the UN world conference on small arms in June by holding marches, concerts and stunts to put pressure on their leaders to support an arms trade treaty.

Over 800,000 people in 160 countries have already given their photographs to the Million Faces Petition, which is the world's largest photo petition, calling on leaders to back stricter controls on the arms trade. It will be delivered at the June conference, representing the million people who have been killed by arms since the last UN conference on small arms in 2001.

### **Faith in action:**

Go to the Control Arms Control website ([www.controlarms.org](http://www.controlarms.org)) to add your support to the Mission faces Campaign.

## The Declaration of Peace

The majority of the people of the U.S., Iraq, and the rest of the world believe that the U.S.-led war and occupation in Iraq must end. In September 2005 Maryknoll leadership said, "The U.S. war in Iraq was morally unacceptable from the beginning; we opposed it formally in 2003 and we oppose it now with even greater vigor." They said that the "U.S. should begin quickly withdrawing its military troops, bases and secret prisons from Iraq." There has been no movement in that direction thus far.

The Declaration of Peace is a rapidly growing effort to insist that it is past time for a concrete, comprehensive plan for withdrawal from Iraq. It is a pledge to "declare peace" by creating sustained nonviolent pressure for the establishment of such a plan and to engage in nationwide nonviolent action if a concrete withdrawal plan is not established and activated by September 23, 2006, just days before Congress adjourns for the fall elections.

For information, go to <http://www.DeclarationOfPeace.org> or call 773-338-8445.

## Corporate accountability: Abbott pressed to make new anti-AIDS drug accessible, affordable

*In October 2005, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved a new formulation of Abbott Laboratories' anti-retroviral drug Kaletra. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recognized this anti-AIDS drug, a tablet formulation of two protease inhibitors, Lopinavir and Retrovir, as an "essential medicine." It will be included in the WHO's revised antiretroviral treatment guidelines, in which boosted protease inhibitors represent the cornerstone of second-line therapy (after resistance to initial medications occurs). This new version of Kaletra can be stored without refrigeration. However, as of this writing, the drug is only available in the United States.*

When Doctors Without Borders/Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF) inquired about the price and availability of this new product for its patients and placed an order in March 2006, Abbott responded that it would wait until the product was available in Europe before requesting marketing approval in developing countries. This means a potential delay of years before this drug reaches the people who can benefit from it most.

Abbott requested proof of special import authorization from the countries where MSF intends to use the drugs. Yet, says MSF, "this creates an impossible situation, as some countries will not even begin processing special authorization until they are provided with an order confirmation. There are no regulatory or legal barriers that prevent Abbott from fulfilling the order: Abbott can ship the drugs at the same time as MSF works on getting the authorizations, which it does under its own responsibility."

Abbott has suggested that access to the old version of the drug should be sufficient until Abbott makes the new drug available in developing countries. According to MSF, "this is unacceptable, as it could take years, and the old version, which needs refrigeration, is unsuitable for use in many countries where MSF works."

The company later stated that it has filed to register the drug in South Africa, and announced a price of US\$500 per patient per year in African and least developed countries. It did not disclose its price for middle-income countries. As of early April, Abbott has not given MSF a confirmation as to when it will fulfill MSF's order for this medicine for use in developing countries.

On April 5, more than 200 public health experts and advocacy groups, led by UN Special Envoy for HIV/

AIDS in Africa Stephen Lewis, wrote to Abbott CEO Miles White to express concerns about the lack of availability of Kaletra, known by its medical abbreviation LPV/r, in developing countries. The letter urged Abbott to take the following actions to make this crucial new drug accessible:

"1. Immediately file for registration of the new LPV/r formulation in all countries where the old formulation was registered or pending, as well as in other developing countries. The old version of LPV/r is registered in 55 countries and registration is pending in 13 others, covering 68 of the 69 countries eligible in Abbott's Access Program. But the new formulation of the drug has not been registered in any country except for the U.S.

"2. Communicate the countries and the filing dates where registration of the new formulation of LPV/r is pending and a timeline for submissions to remaining countries... so that health advocates in these countries can work with national drug regulatory authorities to overcome any delays and provide a timeline for submitting remaining registration requests.

"3. Establish a price that is at least as low as the price for the old formulation in least-developed countries (\$500 per patient per year). Abbott's Access Program for the old formulation of LPV/r excludes middle-income countries, resulting in prices up to 12 times more than in least-developed African countries. We urge you to make the new formulation available at an affordable price in middle-income countries where millions live on less than US\$2 per day.

"4. Develop a pediatric formulation of the new formulation of LPV/r. WHO draft pediatric guidelines recommend LPV/r for use in children if there is cold-chain access. While this new formulation overcomes the storage challenges presented by the old formulation, care-providers would not be able to cut or crush tablets because the new LPV/r is a coated tablet. Therefore, care providers need a pediatric version of this formulation so that they can provide adequate second-line regimens for children as well as adults.

"5. Work with countries to make the new formulation of LPV/r easily available while registration applications are being considered. Because the drug registration process can take months if not years to complete, we ask that Abbott establish a reliable interim system to distribute this new formulation to treatment programs in developing countries while registration is pending."

## Resources

- 1) **Breaking Faith with Nuclear Weapons:** This new publication from Faithful Security, the National Religious Partnership on the Nuclear Weapons Danger is a 20-page organizing resource for religious communities. The full-color packet contains a model resolution, sample sermons, organizing tips, prayers of different faiths, and more. Faithful Security is a network of citizens who participate in the National Religious Partnership on the Nuclear Weapons Danger, committed to organizing religious communities on a local level to break faith with nuclear weapons once and for all. Visit [www.faithfulsecurity.org](http://www.faithfulsecurity.org) for information. Individual packets are \$3 each; contact Faithful Security for bulk prices. Faithful Security: National Religious Partnership on the Nuclear Weapons Danger, 803 North Main Street, Goshen, IN 46528; [kjacob@faithfulsecurity.org](mailto:kjacob@faithfulsecurity.org); (800)233-6786 (ext. 12) or out-of-country-callers: 574-534-3402.
- 2) **MisFortune500:** This new web-based resource, [www.misfortune500.org](http://www.misfortune500.org), exposes how corporate activities violate women's human rights, workers' rights and the environment and highlight what women worldwide are doing about it. To contribute, send stories, testimonies, case studies and/or news articles that address the impact of corporate practices on women's lives in your country or region; send stories about women's resistance, and information about current or ongoing campaigns and actions; and send publications and advocacy tools that address corporate practices, economic policies and/or women's alternatives to [info@misfortune500.org](mailto:info@misfortune500.org).
- 3) **Tarnished Image: Latin America Perceives the United States:** This new publication from the Latin America Working Group Education Fund examines Latin American editorials, op-eds and news coverage which have vividly lamented the Bush administration's choice to disregard international human rights standards, especially regarding the treatment of prisoners, and to ignore international mechanisms of cooperation, launching a preemptive war. Recent administrations have supported economic policies that are perceived as failing to deliver equitable development. The new symbol of the U.S.-Latin America divide is the increasingly fortified fence along the U.S.-Mexico border, called by Latin American leaders "an affront to Latin America" or "a return to intolerance and the failure of dialogue." Despite these differences, the report notes that most of Latin America's diverse center-left governments actively seek a productive, positive relationship with the U.S. The U.S. is facing a more assertive Latin America, and will have to adapt to this maturing relationship. See the full report at: <http://www.lawg.org/docs/tarnishedimage.pdf>; Spanish version at: <http://www.lawg.org/docs/problemasdeimagen.pdf>, or contact LAWG-EF at 202-546-7010 for a copy.
- 4) **Through the Eye of a Hurricane: Rebuilding Just Communities:** This new worship planning resource from the National Council of Churches describes the devastation of the Gulf Coast region, particularly issues of environmental justice and racism, toxic contamination, and consumer lifestyles. The catastrophes of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita pose a challenge to people of faith around the world. As Christians, we call for those rebuilding the Gulf Coast to do so in a way that is just for God's land and God's people. This resource provides the background information, sermon notes, bulletin insert, and study questions to plan a worship service dedicated to a faithful call to justice on the Gulf Coast. To download the resource or for more information, visit <http://www.ncccojustice.org/Earth%20Day/index.html> or e-mail [info@ncccojustice.org](mailto:info@ncccojustice.org).
- 5) **God's People Can Wait No Longer: Twenty Years Since Economic Justice For All:** Pax Christi USA will hold its annual assembly July 28-30 at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. The conference, co-sponsored by Duquesne University's Office for Mission and Identity and Campus Ministry's Just Youth, will deepen reflection on how the unfinished agenda of the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter "Economic Justice for All" can be pursued today. Participants will listen to the stories and the calls of solidarity from labor, the Katrina-devastated communities in the Gulf, the victims of the current war and occupation in Iraq, to those at the Mexico-U.S. border, and much more. Prayer and music will be woven throughout the conference, led by internationally-renowned musician and liturgist, Marty Haugen. For more information, contact Pax Christi USA at [www.paxchristiusa.org](http://www.paxchristiusa.org) or call 814-453-4955.